

### Learning together

### Synthesizing economic and cultural analysis in the Marxist study of Third World film and video

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We learned a lot from each other in team teaching a course on Third World film at Northwestern University a few years ago. Each of us had a very different background and training in thinking of the subject matter. Manji's experience was in the political economy of communications and rested on institutional analysis. In contrast, Chuck's previous work centered in cultural analysis using an aesthetic approach. Both of us shared a Marxist perspective, which helped us understand our common agreements and our distinct differences. Since that time we have continued to work together as colleagues and friends in developing our research and other interests.

We've developed a fuller understanding of some of the major issues and concerns in dealing with Third World media. We believe that the study of Third World media must be interdisciplinary, multifaceted, and flexible. It must find ways of combining economic and aesthetic concerns, institutional and cultural approaches, social science and arts and humanities studies.

While our experience is unique in some ways, we see that we've been able to overcome some of the usual barriers that separate radical academics interested in culture and communications. Here we want to share what we learned — first, in teaching the course, and subsequently in teaching other courses and pursuing our mutual and diverse projects — in hopes of encouraging other cultural and intellectual workers to also learn together.[1][[open notes in new window](#)]

We hope it will be useful for teachers planning courses, researchers, students, and critics developing an analysis of Third World film, and to film and other media makers, especially in the developing world in thinking about the challenges they face. In addition, this essay functions as a broad introduction to our continuing collaboration.

### Economic and Cultural Analysis

For both of us the most important experience of teaching the course was in what we learned from each other. Our backgrounds had important similarities and differences. We were both Marxists with practical experience in student activism and commercial and radical media work. Both of us believe that the development of Marxism and revolutionary movements in the Third World in the post-WW2 era is vital in providing an expanded understanding of political and cultural change. We shared significant political agreement, and this solidarity helped us work through differences of background, training, and specialization. That's what inspired us to write this article, for we have each grown greatly from interacting and exchanging around these differences which we see as significant (and highly unfortunate) divisions within the current left analysis of culture.

Essentially, Manji's graduate training at Simon Fraser University stressed large scale economic and institutional analysis of international communication. His research interests have centered on consideration of Canadian cultural dependency, international communications issues, and Indian mass media. The communications specialists who have pioneered this type of research are people such as Nicholas Garnham, Thomas Guback, Armand Mattelart, Michelle Mattelart, Herbert Schiller, and Dallas Smythe.

Chuck's academic background is training in comparative literature and aesthetic theory, an experience which emphasized the close study of specific texts and the investigation of cultural problems from a speculative and critical, rather than empirical view. His research has focused on issues of mass culture, particularly as they have developed in recent film studies concerned with ideological analysis using Marxist, feminist, semiotic, and psychoanalytic understanding.

As many people know, these two different approaches are not only divided conceptually, but they are also separated by discipline, department, professional organizations, conferences, and publications in a way which we feel has ended up robbing Marxist study of culture and communication of its most vital combination: the analysis of institutions in political economy terms as well as the close examination of specific cases in terms of critical consciousness. We see an unfortunate, in fact destructive, chasm between these two areas that have developed increasingly powerful and sophisticated analyses and produced immensely significant work. But separated from each other, each is impoverished. The economic analysis of institutions often concentrates on issues of imperialist control and domination, but collapses into one category information and imaginative communication, news and fiction. It often thoughtlessly reproduces high art assumptions about the nature of culture, especially mass culture and entertainment products. And its implications for policy frequently fit in with traditional liberal assumptions about state intervention and a crude and co-optable cultural nationalism. It ends up with little to say to activists and artists.[2]

Radical aesthetic studies of Third World films are differently but equally limited when isolated from a fuller economic and institutional analysis. Films are often discussed with no conception of how they have been shaped by the specific mode of media production in their nation. Films are treated as "texts" with no recognition

of their simultaneous existence as commodities (even in socialist economies). While drawing political conclusions about the value of a specific work, the actual diffusion and reception of films is ignored.

The separation of sociological and aesthetic analysis in North America and elsewhere has hampered intellectual growth and analytic power. In our own department and university, rigid assumptions of intellectual legitimacy and disciplinary boundaries keep people divided from each other's work, and sometimes from each other on a personal level. In this general atmosphere, we've been nourished by the establishment and continuation of organizations such as the Union for Democratic Communications, an alliance of progressive academics and producers of media. UDC conferences have an energizing mix of radical scholarship and practical examples of media activism.[3] In a related development, for the past few years traditional communication analysis has been challenged by strong showings of interest in feminism, academic marxism, and other approaches in the [U.S.] Speech Communication Association and the International Communication Association. Various conferences and film and video festivals have also had an important effect of bringing together, often for the first time, diverse people with shared interests. We also want to acknowledge the important development of national and international cooperation in the field of media. UNESCO has been especially important in this regard, and various international organizations have encouraged practical and scholarly cooperation in the ongoing analysis of the global situation.

Synthesizing both economic and cultural analysis is essential for a fuller view and it is especially necessary to develop the theory and practice of alternative and oppositional media. The crucial merging of these two types of analysis will have to take place with a developed sociological understanding as the mediating point for a synthesis. At the same time, we certainly don't see ourselves as having overcome all the differences and problems. But it's also clear that an important convergence is beginning to take place that promises a productive dialogue, if not yet a synthesis, between cultural analysis and institutional investigation.

### **Third World: The Concept**

We use the term "Third World" not as a geographical indicator but as a political and economic concept.[4] Politically, the Third World nations are those which have experienced colonialism and neo-colonialism. But the concept requires an economic and historical understanding too. After all, the United States and Haiti are both former colonies which gained independence around the same time, but their subsequent and present economic situations are totally different. One became an imperialist superpower, the other has been the poorest nation in the Western hemisphere.

What made different Third World countries and their cinemas interesting to study were the common threads that bind them together: their historical experience under imperialism, the legacy of underdevelopment and cultural domination, their past and current struggles to overcome the vestiges of imperialism and to resist imperialism's new economic, political, military, and cultural forms. Thus,

economic, political, and cultural liberation is the framework within which we analyze these cinemas in their respective countries

An essential foundation for understanding the Third World is historical analysis. Reinterpreting history and rewriting it have been major concerns for Third World intellectuals because their histories have been written for them, usually by people from the metropolitan countries with built-in biases (such as the "white man's burden," the superiority of European/U.S. education, emancipation through high technology, etc.). Studies such as Walter Rodney's *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* and Eduardo Galeano's *The Open Veins of Latin America* are essential reading for understanding the material and human exploitation of the Third World. As the once colonized countries liberated themselves, they needed to reconstruct their history from their own point of view, with an interpretation all their own, which is an ongoing process in much of the world today.

In teaching about this, we make a special effort to focus the students' attention to the need for reinterpreting what they have learned formally and informally and the complex problems that exist in so doing. U.S. students, in particular, having grown up living at the top of the imperialist pyramid, often have little or no exposure to cross-cultural understanding. The first step is simply to help them understand the ideological assumptions that make them take their reality as "normal" and as a sufficient guide for comprehending (and inevitably judging) the rest of the world. We start with considering how the dominant media portray the Third World in both news and entertainment programming.

After developing a critique of the existing media, usually based on current examples, we move on to a reconsideration of fundamental assumptions about the Third World. For example, to get beyond the usual dominant explanation that the high rate of population growth is the principal cause of Third World poverty, it's necessary to examine contemporary structures of economic domination between nations, the imperialist legacy of one-crop and extractive economies, as well as the economic and social nature of the peasant family, among other things. It's also essential to consider the actual nature and effect of population control policy and measures often brought in from the capitalist core, such as involuntary and coercive sterilization (we use the example of Puerto Rico).[5]

We also think it's essential to analyze the Third World with attention to the present international scene and its institutions. Obviously the historical nature of colonialism and imperialism must be discussed as background as well as the development of national liberation movements and socialism in the Third World. The current role of the United Nations, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, multinational corporations, and other global entities needs to be considered. Another vital concern here is distinguishing the range of political and economic systems in the Third World. Latin America provides examples ranging from Cuban communism to Brazilian capitalism, from progressive democracy in Nicaragua to harsh dictatorship in Chile.

This implies, in turn, consideration of the class formation in these societies, both in the period of colonial rule and after national liberation. We need to identify the

classes that benefited from the "changing of the guard" that took place when European powers conquered certain Third World countries, and also the classes that were shored up to act as pillars of imperialism, often for centuries. A full class analysis must also take into account other significant differences within a nation: regional, geographic, occupational, linguistic, racial, religious, gender, and other cultural and social differences. The role of different classes during the liberation struggle, their present status, their links to the metropolitan countries, and their relation to a certain country's development and/or underdevelopment all need consideration as well as their role in the actual or potential transformation to socialism.

## **Culture in the Third World**

The term "culture" has come to mean several different things.[6] In the broad anthropological sense, it refers to a "way of life," embodied in social relations, processes, and material objects. A society's cuisine and dining, for example, contains all three aspects. In a much narrower and more traditional sense, it refers to intellectual and artistic activities and products: the domain of a Ministry of Culture. Our own use of the concept is a broad one, reflecting our concern with considering media arts within a strongly social understanding. In Marxist terms, our analysis is one that recognizes the realm of production and the realm of reproduction, base and superstructure, the economic and the cultural.

In this context, we view national culture as a stratified phenomenon, which is usually in a state of active contention with imperialist imperatives. In some cases, as with India, a pre-existing culture was eroded by the penetration of British values, particularly in the national bourgeoisie. In other cases, as in Cuba, a native culture was totally destroyed, and a colonial slave society was established under Spanish control, which was followed by, in the 20th century, U.S. economic and political domination of the nation until its revolution. It is important with this understanding to analyze the contradictions and resistance taking place in culture under colonial and neo-colonial domination. In Third World countries, we can often find the simultaneous presence of a traditional agrarian folk culture, an artisanal and often urbanized popular culture, a highly commercialized and often imported mass culture, and sometimes an active resistance culture and sometimes a revolutionary culture.

From this perspective, we can understand a long development of cultural resistance, taking place before and after national liberation in various forms and media, and look for its further development in the new society and how that in turn would impact on cinematic experience. It's helpful to look at film in its relation to other arts and forms of communication as well. For example, while not dealing with film *per se*, Jean Franco's *The Modern Culture of Latin America: Society and the Artist* provides an excellent discussion of the themes and forms of Latin American literature and gives an important context for understanding the region's film art and the options open to its makers.

Culture is a site of political contention: at times seemingly quiet, at other times dramatically disruptive. But it is also continuously changing. We are particularly

skeptical of elite notions of culture that dismiss commercial mass culture as simply a vehicle of foreign (or national) domination. Such ideas often rest on dubious assumptions about the passivity of the popular audience and the hypodermic injection of "false consciousness" in the otherwise ideologically pure masses. Any analysis of cultural domination must also include a discussion of cultural appropriation — how people actually receive, understand, and use that which is available to them. A case in point: we've seen several mentions of how the Hollywood Tarzan films present a totally distorted view of Africa. Yet a Black South African student once told us that when he saw the films as a child, he and everyone in the audience understood that this couldn't possibly be Africa because the foliage was all wrong, and the "natives" didn't look like Africans. They concluded that them must be a part of the United States where Tarzan lived.

## **Cinema and Communications**

We think it's essential to understand any national cinema in its relation to the entire communications system of a country. Many of the generalizations and categorical statements made about Third World cinema are wrong or inadequate without a fuller context. Particularly in the present with the dramatic expansion of video production and diffusion, to speak of film as if it were a discrete and autonomous entity is to cripple understanding. We need a good general sense of the state of communications in the different media — print, radio, television, film, data transmission — and technical and institutional development, literacy, etc. Obviously, small nations and very poor ones cannot be expected to develop a full scale film industry given the immense capitalization required. India, with about 800 features a year, displays a very different situation than Grenada or Fiji, with none. In some nations radio and television may be much more significant than film ever can be as a vehicle for national culture. We also need to understand the cultural "mix" in a country. In many Third World countries, music and dance are much more significant parts of the national culture for economic, historical, and cultural reasons than books or newspapers which demand literacy for comprehension.

As it has developed, cinema is basically a Western mode of expression and largely depends on Western technology. And Hollywood films have been early and fundamental carriers of Western culture in the many-sided importation and dependence on Western media in the Third World. Thus, it's necessary to include a discussion of how cultural domination is manifested in different countries and what attempts have been made by the respective governments to adapt to or overcome that situation.

In this perspective, the state of development of a national cinema is a factor of the larger process of cultural domination and the efforts of people and governments to liberate themselves. It is important to understand how a concept such as national cinema might appear differently in different societies and in terms of the kind of meanings it would evoke, depending upon that country's political economy in relation to its place in the international economy. For example, a national cinema in a monolingual country like Cuba has a different meaning from a national cinema

in India with 16 officially recognized languages and about 300 dialects. Cinema's function differs widely depending on a particular country's stage of development — in that capitalist cinema (from Hollywood, Bombay, or Rio de Janeiro) is primarily a profit-making industry which also serves to reinforce dominant ideologies at a given historical moment, while cinema in countries where socialist transformation is taking place will be markedly different. Two cases in point would be Cuba and India, which have dynamic film industries, the former with an internationally recognized critical cinema and the latter with a large capitalist sector and a small, but surely important, state-funded "New Wave" cinema, which has attempted to break from the commercial film tradition both in form and content. Also, we recognize the fact that in some countries cinema has grown largely with direct state intervention, and that this direction has included mandates about its role — often restricting political expression, as in the case of Brazil.

### **Northwestern: Our Own Institutional Situation**

There's an important matter that needs to be understood about being Marxists at Northwestern University. It's very clear to us that the opportunity to teach Third World film and other subjects as Marxists is in many ways a function of being in an elite school.

The course we originally offered enrolled both undergraduate and graduate students, almost all majors in our department, Radio/Television/Film. Intended as a general introduction to recurrent issues and questions within the broad spectrum of Third World cinema, the course was offered under the rubric of "Studies in National Cinema," which opened it to undergrads who had completed the introduction to film history and criticism course, and to all grad students. We began with some ideas on how "we" in the First World look at the Third World, then developed an extended political and economic analysis of imperialism, which was extended to a discussion of cultural imperialism. A discussion of films from India set up some typical types: the mass culture entertainment film and the independent realist cinema. We went on to discuss some Latin American films in terms of specific issues and Canadian film as an example of dependency as another form of imperialist domination.

All but one or two of the twenty some students had some film- and video/tv-making experience and all had some introduction to critical and historical approaches to media. Few of them had any developed political consciousness. Northwestern is an elite private school with about 8500 undergraduates and a small graduate school. The tuition compares with other private schools such as Harvard, Yale, Princeton, and Stanford — about \$11,000 a year at present, plus room, board, and other expenses. The class composition of the student body is predominantly the sons and daughters of the capitalist class and the professional-managerial stratum, with a substantial number of very bright and talented lower middle class and working class scholarship students. The school is overwhelmingly white, The small number of Black students (about 7%) typically come from professional-managerial families. There are also Asian-American students and a few Latinos. The graduate program in our department attracts some foreign

students, particularly from the developing world, due to a number of factors, including faculty interest, a well-established African studies program and a Program on Communication and Development Studies which we work with.

Thus it was not a great surprise the first day of class, when we asked the students to introduce themselves and to give their experience or interest in the course, to have one undergrad say s/he knew nothing about the subject, but the class was offered at "an awfully convenient time." The next speaker was a grad student, a Black political exile from South Africa who had lived and worked in Tanzania and Zimbabwe, who was interested in the course, "to learn how to make revolutionary films."

The actual or potential class position and privilege of NU students, their training as future leaders and decision makers, ensures both that they are open to learning a Marxist analysis and that the institution is quite ready to give it to them. After all, many of our majors will be working directly or indirectly in the international culture industry. Naive xenophobia and simplistic anti-communism has relatively little place in the corporate establishment, where most of our students will find their careers. But in general, they will live and work within a framework that unquestioningly accepts the dominant order of things.

Those who end up in international communications may be a bit more liberal, for they will be making deals with MosFilm executives, Beijing Film Studio managers, and culture ministers of underdeveloped nations. Making commercials for Jamaican tourism, developing campaigns for right wing candidates in Latin America, selling reruns of *Dallas* in Africa and South Asia? You bet. We say this not to be cynical, but to be realistic. We know what the general past history of NU graduating classes has been. But of course we cannot predict the specific future of any one of our students. In that gap we teach and try to develop a critical, materialist consciousness. And in some ways and in some cases we succeed. But in fact, it is the successful development of socialism throughout the world that creates the material and objective conditions for our employment: the capitalist class and its managers have to know how the other side thinks.

At the same time, it must be understood that NU is institutionally totally within the dominant capitalist and imperialist order, and this has very clear and direct consequences for individual faculty and students. NU is a large holder of stocks in business firms doing business in South Africa, for example. The spring before we taught the course, NU hosted a huge Ford Foundation sponsored conference which was a patent whitewash of the apartheid and divestiture issue. No divergent opinion was allowed, however innocent, and a spirited student protest took place during the event. Subsequently, protest organizer Dennis Brutus was denied official university support when he encountered visa problems. A tenured professor of English, distinguished Black South African writer, political exile facing a prison sentence if returned, and leading activist in organizing boycotts of U.S. athletic events involving South Africa — Brutus faced a long and drawn out immigration proceeding and trial which he finally won. In a continuation of this policy, the university was insistent on prosecuting about 100 students for sitting in the



administration building in a 1985 divestment protest, and again in a 1986 protest.

Though some Marxists can be on the NU faculty, in a hiring decision the spring before we taught the course, Julia Lesage, the Marxist-feminist film critic and videomaker and co-editor of JUMP CUT, received a majority vote for hiring in the Radio/TV/Film department, but the decision was reversed by the Dean, Roy V. Wood, in the face of tenured faculty opposition. Then R/T/F chair, Jack C. Ellis, declared in the student newspaper that if Lesage was hired there would be "too many Marxists" on the faculty. (There are reasons to suggest that Lesage's feminism was actually more threatening than her marxism, for at the same time, many male faculty and students were being frequently, openly, and intensely challenged in class by feminist students.)

Recently, Barbara Foley, a Marxist professor of English, was denied tenure by the administration, after being recommended by the faculty, specifically because of her vocal opposition at a campus appearance of the Contra leader, Adolfo Calero. The administration was looking for a scapegoat after Calero was doused with a red liquid by two protesters who escaped, and it singled out Foley, who had been continuously active in campus leftism. Firing Foley served the administration's current goal of transforming NU into a research institution heavily subsidized by corporate funding. In the same vein, in spring 1987, our department agreed, by apparent unanimous agreement, to hire radical mass communications specialist Eileen Meehan, only to have the decision overturned by the chair, Larry Lichty, and Dean Wood who explicitly said she would not fit in with research directions desired by the Ameritech Corporation which had given the school a \$500,000 grant. As Marxists we can hardly be surprised by such actions, for Marxist analysis shows that under capitalism the universities serve the needs of the capitalist class.

We have the privilege of being tenured and openly Marxist in our professional work and teaching, and we cannot forget that in other places today this is not possible. And in recent times, one could not teach as a Marxist at Northwestern or in most U.S. universities. But the other side of that privilege is that we have little ability to effect institutional change at NU, particularly in the absence of a dynamic student movement, staff organizing, and a progressive faculty coalition.

## **A Course Syllabus**

We made a few mistakes and had a few problems the first time through. Here we want to present an improved, second generation syllabus for the course to give an idea of what we think is important to cover and in what order. We based the course on our own areas of specialization: Latin America, India, and Canada. African, Middle Eastern, and Southeast Asian cinemas were not covered, but provide ample and interesting examples. In subsequent articles we will discuss related teaching covering subjects such as contemporary Central America, the political economy of international communication, and Third World film/video theory, and provide a detailed bibliography.[7]

Northwestern uses the 10 week quarter system, with classes meeting two days a week for two hours a session, which is characterized by some students as a "binge

and purge" learning situation; what follows could be easily expanded in the semester system.

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### **1. Introduction.**

Administration; class introductions; introductory lecture on defining the Third World. Film/video excerpts to show how the dominant media portray the Third World, followed by discussion.

Current TV news always provides examples of hot-spot location reports by network news "reporters" who don't know the local language. Christian TV missionary pitches are also easily seen as ideological, as are clips from jingoistic films such as *Rambo*. Less obvious is the imperialism of using the Third World as an exotic site for a First World romantic hero — *Casablanca*, *The Year of Living Dangerously*, *The Killing Fields*, *Under Fire*, etc.

### **2. The First World Looks at the Third World.**

Reading: Edmundo Desnoes, "The Photographic Image of Underdevelopment" [published in this issue of JUMP CUT]; excerpts from Ariel Dorfman and Armand Mattelart, *How to Read Donald Duck: Imperialist Ideology in the Disney Comic* (NY: International General, 1975). Introductory readings on imperialism. Lecture: Introduction to the history and economics of the Third World; basic concepts and terms.

We develop a critique of dominant images, using current examples from print and TV, but also criticize Dorfman and Mattelart for not dealing with the pleasure and entertainment of Disney and having a simplistic and moralistic "hypodermic" theory of ideological indoctrination. Excerpts from Disney's *Three Caballeros* and *Saludos Amigos* work well here because they were part of the conscious WW2 "Good Neighbor Policy" ideological offensive by the State Department, Rockefeller interests, and Hollywood. It would also be useful to show and discuss an ethnographic documentary at this point. Originally we used Felix Greene's *The Enemy: What Every American Should Know About Imperialism* (NY: Vintage, 1971), which is clear and contains a superb analysis, but which is now dated in its examples and details. We don't know a current substitute.

### **3. Capitalism.**

Reading: on imperialism. Lecture: economic development of capitalism; its transformation into modern imperialism. Film/discussion. Excerpts from the animated film, *The History Book*; Part 1, "A Flickering Light in the Darkness" (Dark Ages to feudalism, rise of merchant class, exploration); Part 5, "Triumphant Symphony" (Industrial Revolution, rise of finance capital, labor theory of value) [review by John Hess in JUMP CUT no. 6 (Mar-Apr 75) 78].

We think it essential to give the students a good preparation in the historical, economic, and political development of imperialism as the "highest stage of capitalism." We find that our majors usually lack such information or familiarity with history, economics, and politics as types of analysis and information.

#### **4. Imperialism.**

Readings: on imperialism. Lecture: capitalism and imperialism, class stratification in the Third World, different states of development.

#### **5. National Liberation.**

Readings: selections from classic writings such as Ho Chi Minh and Che Guevara, plus material keyed to later films or national topics. Screening: *Battle of Algiers* or *Burn!* (both Pontecorvo) or another dramatic feature on colonial or national liberation history serves to raise key issues, particularly violence and military resistance to colonial oppression.

#### **6. Multinationals and the International Information Order.**

Readings: *NACLA Report* 16:4 (July-Aug. 1982) on the International Information Order. Selections on multinationals and communications from Armand Mattelart and Seth Seigelaub, eds., *Communication and Class Struggle*, 2 vols. (NY: International General); Thomas Guback, *The International Film Industry*; Armand Mattelart, *Multinational Corporations and the Control of Culture*; Herbert Schiller, *Communication and Cultural Domination*. Lecture: contemporary multinational capitalism, emphasis on the film industry. Film: *Controlling Interest* (San Francisco Newsreel, on multinationals).

The issue of international control of communications focuses the central issues, particularly in light of the U.S. withdrawal from UNESCO. The *NACLA Report* is an excellent summary. Schiller and Mattelart provide essential background, though both tend to collapse ownership into control and assume effects without considering cultural resistance, change, and selective interpretation

#### **7. Urbanization and the Culture of Poverty.**

Reading: "Cine-sociology and Social Change" (interview with Marta Rodriguez and Jorge Silva) in Julianne Burton, ed., *Cinema and Social Change in Latin America* (Austin: U of Texas Press, 1986). Film and discussion: *The Brickmakers*.

Economic conditions which drive people out of rural areas (and concomitant agricultural proletarianization) produce the widespread Third World phenomenon of urbanization and city poverty. This Columbian documentary shows poverty level production, merciless child labor, and raises key issues of realism and the filmmaker-subject relationship. The subject of the rural family displaced in the city treated in a realist aesthetic is very prevalent in Third World film, both documentary and dramatic fiction.

#### **8/9. Commercial Third World Cinema.**

Lecture on India and Indian Cinema. Film: *Roti, Kapda aur Makan* (tr. *Bread, Clothing and Housing*, 1979).

We thought it was important to show a highly successful mass culture film made in the Third World, and Hindi cinema provides many examples. There is comparable commercial production in other countries, such as Mexico and Egypt. This particular film is notable for its use of popular stars, hit musical soundtrack, portrayal of social issues and class differences (resolved through getting justice

against a small group of villains), and representation of the family as prime social unit. Our students were intrigued by the film's violation of classical Hollywood editing and its mixture of genres (musical, martial art, melodrama). In taking the film seriously (just as auteur and genre criticism took Hollywood seriously), our intent was polemical — because many Third World intellectuals dismiss popular cinema as junk from a high culture view. We stressed understanding the attractive and intriguing elements in Hindi film. Many Hindi films are available on video in urban North American areas with substantial Indian populations. *Coolie* (Prayag Raj and Manmohan Desai) is a very popular and widely available subtitled film on tape which also works well. It includes themes of Moslem/Hindu difference and harmony, a massive strike, and resolution through supernatural interventions. We also showed an excerpt from another Hindi genre: the mythological work which transposes Sanskrit classics and legends to film.

### **10/11. Third World "Second Cinema."**

Reading: excerpts from *Film India: The New Generation, 1960-1980* (New Delhi: Directorate of Film Festivals, 1981); Udayan Gupta, "The New Indian Cinema: A Cinema in a Non-revolutionary Society," JUMP CUT no. 8, 1975. Film: *Manthan* (tr. *The Churning*) (Shayam Benegal, 1976).

Satyajit Ray, the "Dean of Indian Cinema," provides the prime example in India of a director who successfully has had his work shown in the West at festivals and in art house exhibition. We did not teach one of his films, but if we did it would probably be *The Chess Players*, and we would emphasize the way it represents Victorian India standards of tasteful high art, moral seriousness, and lack of political outrage or commitment. The "New Wave" cinema in India has done well in prestige exhibition outside of India. In India it is only seen by the professional-managerial stratum and has no popular base. While we are interested in it and applaud its taking on of political and social issues, we also recognize its limits in not reaching a wider audience. The example we chose, *Manthan*, tells the story of a city-bred veterinarian who comes to a village and tries to set up a dairy cooperative. The film was financed by one rupee (about 10 cents) donations from 500,000 milk farmers who were members of a dairy cooperative in Gujarat. Other interesting New Wave films are *In Search of Famine* (Mirnal Sen. 1980), *Chakra* (Dharamraj, 1980), *Akrosh* (Nihalani, 1980).

Much of Third World "Second Cinema" continues the tradition of the naturalist problem play and fits into discussions of realist aesthetics. It is also productive to consider its contribution to developing a national cinema. For a provocative background on the issue applied to Brazil: Hans Proppe and Susan Tarr, "Cinema Novo: Pitfalls of Cultural Nationalism," JUMP CUT 10/11.

### **12. Theory of Third Cinema.**

Reading: Frantz Fanon, "Pitfalls of National Consciousness," from his *The Wretched of the Earth*; Fernando Solanas and Octavio Gettino, "Towards a Third Cinema," in Bill Nichols, ed., *Movies and Methods* (Berkeley: U of California Press, 1976); Teshome Gabriel, "Introduction" and "Theoretical Context," from his *Third Cinema in the Third World: The Aesthetics of Liberation* (Ann Arbor: U.MN.

Research Press, 1982). Lecture/discussion: the politics of Third Cinema.

At this point in the course it was important to lay out the detailed argument of these essays. We have many disagreements with the Solanas/Gettino position, which is the starting point for most theoretical discussions. Gabriel's entire book is pertinent to the course, but its cost of \$44 for 156 pages is outrageous. Fortunately it can be easily xeroxed for a fraction of that price.

### **13/14. Underdevelopment and the Intellectual Strata.**

Reading: Julia Lesage, "Memories of Underdevelopment: Images of Underdevelopment," JUMP CUT no. 1; Tomás Gutierrez Alea, *The Viewer's Dialectic*, part three, JUMP CUT no. 32; Julio García Espinosa, "For an Imperfect Cinema," JUMP CUT no. 20. Film: *Memories of Underdevelopment* (Tomás Gutierrez Alea).

We screened the film and then discussed it with a close analysis of several sequences. Since it is modern/ postmodern in form and mood and centers on a person much like our own students in class and political sensibility, we found it especially effective.

### **15. Third World Feminist Media.**

Screening/discussion. *India Cabaret* (Mira Nair), or *A Man When He Is a Man* (Valeria Sarmiento).

Recently there has been an explosive development of a distinctive Third World feminism, which challenges First World feminism to rethink and redefine the goals and parameters of feminist thought, and which challenges Third World political thought and action to become truly representative of all people. There has also been a flowering of media by and about women in the Third World. *India Cabaret* is a documentary which explores the work and lives of bar performers who, in a society where a woman must be linked to a man, are economically and emotionally independent. As marginals they offer a fascinating critique of the social norm. Sarmiento's documentary on Latin machismo lets men damn themselves out of their own mouths. The result is a witty and increasingly acid criticism of male attitudes and behavior.

### **16. New Forms for National Culture.**

Reading: Fanon, "On National Culture," from *The Wretched of the Earth*; dossier on The Terror and the Time in JUMP CUT no 26. Film: *The Terror and the Time* (Victor Jara Collective, 1978).

The film brings out issues of forming a national culture in Guyana and imperialism's response to a legally elected progressive government (overthrow it). It uses innovative forms in a very low-ratio shooting situation and involves reconstructing history through scarce available images (e.g., from newspapers). This film was especially interesting to some students because it was close to the kind of low budget film they could imagine themselves making. Some students considered sexist the film's use of images of bourgeois white colonial women as objects of satire. This is a common problem in working with Third World film and

must be faced squarely, not avoided or excused. Sexism is sexism, no matter how otherwise progressive the makers.

### **17. Dependency in the Capitalist Core.**

Reading: Manji Pendakur, "Film Policies in Canada: In Whose Interest?" *Media, Culture and Society*, 3:2 (April 1981) and Pendakur, "U.S.-Canada Relations: Cultural Dependence and Conflict," in V. Mosco and J. Wasko, eds., *Changing Patterns of Control in Communications*, vol. 2, (Philadelphia, Ablex, 1983).  
Film/discussion: *Has Anybody Here Seen Canada?* (National Film Board).

While Canada is not a Third World country, by examining its cultural dependency we were able to consider another aspect of imperialist domination in a case very close to home. The film describes the underdeveloped history of Canadian cinema. It could be supplemented with excerpts from some of the most financially successful recent Canadian films such as *Porky's* and *Police Academy* as a reflection on what domination/dependency does to a national cinema in a free market situation.

### **18. National Minority Cinema in the First World.**

When we first taught the course, we covered this topic with a Quebecois film, *Les Ordres* (*The Orders*, Michel Brault, 1974). Today it would be interesting to include one of the new films coming from the India/Pakistan communities in England if they become available in the United States, or a Cuban exile film or tape, such as *El Super*, to continue those themes. Of course there are many films and tapes to represent the African diaspora and an increasing number of Asian-American works.

### **19. Summary Lectures.**

In addition to summarizing and reviewing the course, we reviewed the main features of Indian and Cuban national cinemas in the context of their respective national history, economic and political development, and ongoing relation to U.S./Soviet contention.

### **20. Final screening.**

Course evaluation. Reading: Fanon, "Concerning Violence"; Julia Lesage, "*The Other Francisco: Creating History*," JUMP CUT no 30. Film: *The Other Francisco* (Sergio Giral, 1975).

The final film brought together issues of history and why history is such an important topic for Third World filmmaking. In depicting slave life and rebellion in colonial Cuba, the film sums up important issues raised earlier in the course. It makes an especially interesting contrast to *Burn!* if that film is shown earlier.

## **Issues and Conclusions**

Rather than an approach to Third World media which sees it only in terms of an economic and political analysis, with no reference to actual cultural objects and experiences, or an approach which seeks discrete masterpieces of feature fiction by auteur directors, our motivation was to combine, and where possible synthesize,

the aesthetic/cultural side and the political economy side. Trying it made us realize how challenging and yet how necessary this was. It sharpened our interest in historical analysis, in Third World media theory, and our concern for case studies.

Many issues and themes were developed in the course which were provocative and called for further development. The role of women in making media and their representation within it were obvious concerns as well as the position of intellectuals, particularly media professionals. The aesthetic and political issues of realism, so familiar in recent discussions in Eurocentric criticism, were again on the agenda. We also saw that these issues gained considerable force from the opportunity to compare and contrast the Cuban and Indian cinemas and their national contexts and different paths to development.

Of course, there is a danger of simplistic reductionism in discussing Third World media as if it were all identical. Individual national differences and cultural specificity must be constantly in mind: one reason for concentrating on cinemas we knew well, rather than including African or Islamic work to gain breadth. But as Marxists we are also convinced that it is important to consider the undeniable similarities in Third World media, similarities which stem from the structures and histories of imperialist domination. The strength of the course was in introducing the students to central issues, themes, and styles that kindled their curiosity to probe more on their own.

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## NOTES

1. We first presented these ideas at the Summer Teaching Institute, Center for Critical Theory and Interpretation, at the University of Illinois, Urbana, June 1983. In addition to the feedback we received there, Julianne Burton, John Hess, Julia Lesage, Peter Steven, Keyan Tomaselli, and Tom Waugh critiqued draft versions. We draw on other teachers' work as well: Robert Stam, "College Course File: Third World Cinema," *Journal of Film and Video*, 36:4 (Fall 84) 50-61; and Teshome H. Gabriel, "Teaching Third World Cinema," *Screen* (U.K.), 24:2, (Mar-Apr 83) 60-64.
2. We realize that these are substantial criticisms of work that comes from radical intellectuals whom we respect, and we do not make them lightly. We cannot expand on them here, but will in a later article.
3. For information of UDC membership, contact Karen Paulsell, UDC, 5338 College, #C, Oakland CA 94618.
4. We understand the phrase in an operative and instrumental sense: "Third World" seems the most widely used term. We're aware of other terms such as "underdeveloped," "developing," "peripheral" and "marginal." We're also aware of objections that such terms all tend to connote an inferiority. We certainly don't believe these nations are inferior. The important thing in developing an anti-imperialist analysis is not this or that word, but the core political concepts.
5. Ana Maria Garcia's film, *La Operación*, distributed by Women Make Movies, is

excellent for explaining this. See Kimberly Safford's review and interview in JUMP CUT no. 29, 37-39.

6. For a detailed discussion: Raymond Williams, *Key Words: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (NY: Oxford UP, 1976), pp. 76-82.

7. Roy Ames, *Third World Film Making and the West* (Berkeley: U of California Press, 1987), contains an extensive up-to-date bibliography of material in English.

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